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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1793
RUEHBS/USMISSION USEU 0258
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RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MINSK 000020

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/14/2018
TAGS: PHUM PGOV PINR BO
SUBJECT: REPRESSION AFTER JANUARY 10 PROTEST CONTINUES

REF: A. MINSK 017

¶B. 07 MINSK 728
¶C. MINSK 013

Classified By: Charge Jonathan Moore for reason 1.4 (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) The GOB continued its repression of both individuals
and organizations involved in last week's large demonstration
against new small business regulations. Simultaneously the
GOB sent out a feeler for further negotiations, which
activists rejected. The GOB's rapid reaction indicates its
trepidation that a protest scheduled for January 21 could
damage the regime's seeming invincibility. End summary.

24 Participants Sentenced to 15-20 Days in Jail
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¶2. (U) Of the 27 participants detained by security forces at
the January 10 entrepreneurs' demonstration (ref A), 22 were
sentenced to 15 days in jail for participating in an
unsanctioned demonstration and cursing in public. One of
those sentenced, Yuriy Koksyuk, allegedly suffered a broken
rib due to police brutality. The court sentenced youth
activist Tatyana Tishkevich (ref B) to 20 days in jail. The
court postponed two hearings due to the health concerns of
suspects whom were injured upon arrest or while in detention.
 Three minors were released to their parents without being
charged.

¶3. (U) The Ministry of Interior Affairs (MVD) Moscow Rayon
branch in Minsk called in one of the demonstration's
organizers, Aleksandr Makayev, on January 12. The MVD
promptly arrested Makayev and he was also sentenced to 15
days.

Double Jeopardy for Regional Activist

¶4. (SBU) On January 12, authorities in Borisov retried
Viktor Gorbachev, whom a court previously acquitted (ref C),
on charges of petty hooliganism. Judge Aleksey Bolotov fined
Gorbachev USD 326 (BYR 700,000) despite testimony from an MVD
officer and a bystander that Gorbachev only protected his
family from an unprovoked attack. Gorbachev told Acting
Pol/Econ Chief he plans to appeal the decision.

Political Parties and NGO Come Under Attack

¶5. (U) On January 12, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) demanded
that three of the main constituent parties in the opposition

coalition -- the United Civic Party (UCP), the Belarusian
Party of Communists, and the Belarusian Popular Front --
explain the participation of their members in last week's
demonstration. Also on January 12, the MOJ applied to the
Supreme Court to liquidate the NGO Perspektiva, which played
a leading role in organizing the demonstration.

GOB's Offer to Negotiate a Non-Starter

¶6. (C) Seemingly in contrast, Gorbachev received a letter
from MP Anatoliy Pavlovich on January 11 proposing further
dialogue. Gorbachev said no negotiations would take place
without the release of all protestors and a moratorium on the
section of Presidential Order 760 restricting sole
proprietors' employment practices. Gorbachev did allow his
colleague, UCP Minsk oblast Chair Lev Margolin, to email
Pavlovich alternative legislation drafted by entrepreneurs.

Comment: Lukashenko Underlings Trying to Prove Worth
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¶7. (C) The swift reaction of the MVD and the MOJ shows that
the GOB takes the threat of a further demonstration on
January 21 very seriously. However, Gorbachev declared that
repressing individuals and organizations supporting the last
demonstration would backfire against authorities by further
motivating entrepreneurs to protest.

¶8. (C) Typically Belarusian Television's main weekly
analytical program would have run a segment on the
demonstration. The absence of such a story suggests even the
GOB doubts the wisdom of its current strategy to tamp down
dissent from previously acquiescent entrepreneurs.

MINSK 00000020 002 OF 002

MOORE